

**State Historic Preservation Office
Michigan State Housing Development Authority**

**Staff Comments, April 19, 2016
B'nai David Cemetery Local Historic District, Detroit**

When looking at a cultural landscape like a cemetery, the report should address features such as spatial organization, topography, vegetation, circulation, as well as structures, furnishings and objects. The report should identify these items and determine which are contributing and which are non-contributing. This report does not do that. A list should be included along with the required percent of historic to non-historic.

More detail about features should be included. For example, on page 9 the report indicates there is a high metal entry gate—what does it look like? Is it decorative? Historic?

Is there any change in monuments due to time period? In non-Jewish cemeteries, distinct fashions in types of gravestones have been determined. Is spacing of the graves in all parts of the cemetery the same even during different time periods?

The period of significance should be the 50 year cut off as determined by the Secretary of the Interior of the National Register of Historic Places.

A site map of the cemetery should be included with significant features and vegetation indicated. An overview map showing the location of the cemetery within the city of Detroit should be included. All maps must contain the name of the district, community, county, and date.

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL

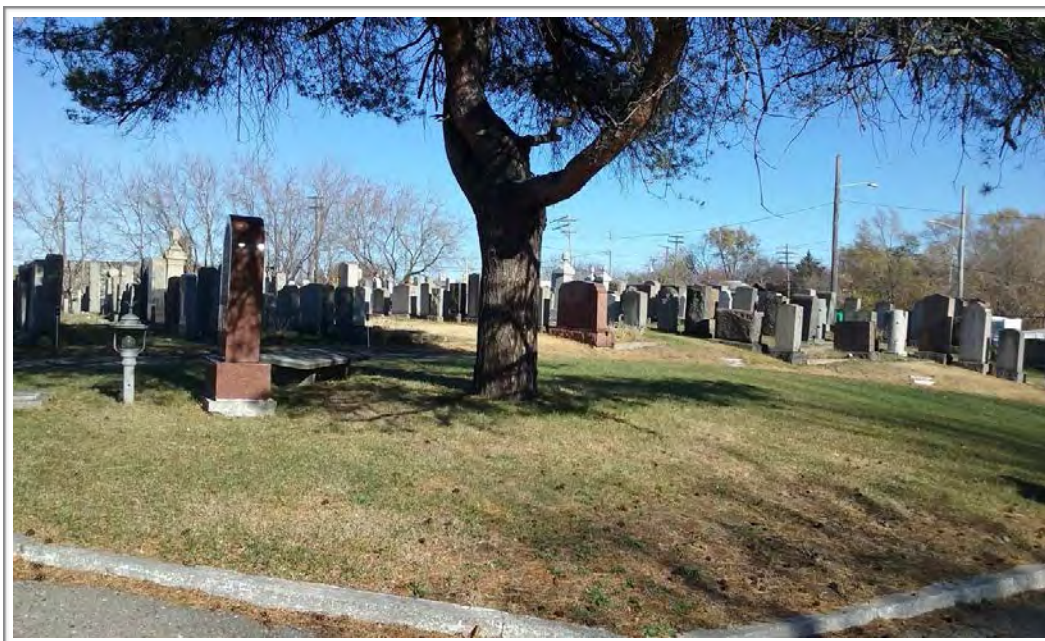
Historic Designation Advisory Board

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DRAFT Preliminary Report B'nai David Cemetery Historic District



By a resolution dated February 23, 2016, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB), a study committee, with the official study of the proposed B'nai David Cemetery Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

B'nai David Cemetery at 9535 Van Dyke Avenue occupies a large parcel of land on a hill on an almost triangular block bounded by Van Dyke Avenue on the east, Grinnell on the north, St. Cyril on the West, and Marjorie on the south. Its location is approximately 5.5 miles from downtown Detroit. It was established in 1898 by Congregation Beth David, which was, at its last location, at 2201 Elmhurst Street and is now a locally designated historic district (New Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church/Beth David Synagogue Historic District). Approximately 1300 interments, the first in 1903 and the last in 2015, took place in the cemetery.

BOUNDARIES:

The boundaries of the proposed B'nai David Cemetery Historic District, shown in bold lines on the attached map, are as follows:

On the north, the centerline of the vacated alley running east-west, between Grinnell and vacated Sheehan;
on the east, the centerline of Van Dyke Avenue;
on the south, the centerline of the vacated alley, as extended, between Marjorie and vacated Sheehan; and,
on the west, the centerline of St. Cyril.

Boundary Justification: The boundaries are the same as that property belonging to the Beth David Cemetery Association.

HISTORY:

The period of significance of B'nai David Cemetery extends from 1903, when a record of the first burial exists, through 2015, with the last.

The history of B'nai David Cemetery Association is inherently entwined with that of Beth David Synagogue, founded as a Jewish orthodox congregation in 1892. Established by a group of fourteen recent immigrants from Russia, the congregation originally met in a rented facility at the northwest corner of Gratiot Avenue and Hastings Street before relocating into its first permanent home at 293 Adelaide Street between Hastings and Rivard, dedicated on September 9, 1900. Under Jewish law, Jews were required to be buried with other Jews, so Beth David, soon after its founding, established a cemetery.

The B'nai David Cemetery is one of Detroit's oldest Jewish cemeteries. It was organized in 1897 as Beth David Cemetery and incorporated on July 7, 1903. One day afterwards, an Article of Agreement was executed between John V. Sheehan and his wife to Beth David Cemetery Association, a Michigan Corporation, for \$1,500, with \$300 paid up front.¹ The property was then in Hamtramck Township, until 1916, when it was incorporated into the city of Detroit. On October 29, 1917, an indenture for fulfillment of the land contract was recorded.²

On September 10, 1903, a lawsuit was brought by plaintiffs Charles F. Liebolt, Therese Huetteman, Augusta Kabbe and Joseph Nuremberg against Beth David Cemetery Association to restrain them from using the property for burial purposes. The complainants owned fifty-six acres in the immediate vicinity, valued at \$100,000. They had wells not too far from the cemetery grounds and were worried that, in wet weather, the flow of water from the hill-top cemetery would flow back on their land, infecting their drinking water, polluting the soil, and "rendering it untenable."³ Alleging injury to their property values, the suit also asked the court "to order defendant to remove the body of a child, who was interred July 24, the only body resting in the

¹ Article of Agreement between John V. Sheehan and wife to Beth David Cemetery Association, a MI Corporation, July 8, 1903.

² Warranty Deed, Wayne County, Liber 1238. p. 280.

³ "Property owners bring action against Beth David Association," *Detroit Tribune*, 11 Sept 1903.

cemetery at present.”⁴ Presumably the lawsuit was settled to allow the cemetery association to continue to use the site for burials.

The cemetery was located on Van Dyke about 5.5 miles from the center of downtown Detroit, among farm land owned by people of German descent. Mt. Olivet (17100 Van Dyke, 1888) and Forest Lawn (11851 Van Dyke, Catholic, 1889) cemeteries were a short distance north on Van Dyke; Gethsemane Cemetery, adjacent to Detroit City Airport, was also in the general area. These cemeteries, called *rural* cemeteries, were reached by horse wagon and then streetcar when they were first established.

The popularization of the automobile in the first few decades of the 20th century led to a need for expansion of the city’s major thoroughfares that led into the city. Those roads, including Mt. Elliott, Gratiot, Woodward, Michigan, Fort, Jefferson, Mack, and Van Dyke, were first completed as county roads that connected villages and cities. Before 1906, these roads were not paved and, therefore, not suited for motorized vehicles. The Center Line-Harper Streetcar, a Detroit United Railway (DUR) electric interurban line, ran along tracks located on the east side of Van Dyke across from the cemetery. The northern terminus of this line was at a turn-around loop on the southeast corner of Warren Boulevard; its southern end was at the intersection of Van Dyke and Harper Avenues. From there, the southbound traveler would have to transfer to the Harper Line of the Detroit Street Railways (DSR) which ended at Cadillac Square in downtown Detroit.⁵

As Detroit expanded with industry and commerce in the early 20th century, its population and area spread outward, leading to the establishment of new subdivisions along Van Dyke. By the 1920s, large numbers of automobiles and trucks were being driven on narrow concrete roadways that were 18’ wide with a 3’ shoulder. In that year, truck traffic had increased twenty-nine times on Van Dyke since 1912; horse drawn vehicles decreased by 3.8%.⁶ A major city-wide street widening program was planned. Van Dyke was widened in 1932,⁷ perhaps effecting some of the graves closest to the street.

Meanwhile, as membership in Congregation Beth David grew, it moved to the former Shaarey Zedek location at 545 Winder Street, between Beaubien and Hastings, in 1915. The following year, membership included a total of 178 families. The Jewish population in the city increased significantly as more Jews left the shtetls of Eastern Europe and joined other Jews from New York and other cities on the East Coast that were attracted by Detroit’s growing automobile industry. The Jewish population followed a north and northwest pattern of movement from its former near-downtown settlement. While many new synagogues were founded, existing ones were expanded. From 1925 to 1928 Congregation Beth David met in a location at Owen Street in the city’s North End neighborhood while awaiting the completion of its larger facility nearby at 2201 Elmhurst. The magnificent, 1,600-seat structure is illustrative of the size and prosperity of the community in the 1920s.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ http://centerline.grobbel.org/wes/photos_remainder.htm#streetcar

⁶ Edward N. Hines, *Trucking Business*, Volume 26, Concrete Roads of Wayne County.

⁷ “Move to Speed Widening Jobs,” *Michigan Roads and Construction*, Vol 16, p. 2, 20 Oct 1932.

However, the prosperity did not last long; the Great Depression in the early 1930s reshaped the economy in Detroit as it did nationwide. In 1933, Rabbi Aishiskin retired and Rabbi Joshua Sperka began to serve the Beth David congregation. Around this time, Beth David Synagogue at Elmhurst and 14th Street reorganized itself as it faced financial challenges, creating a new entity with the name of B'nai David. The six cemetery association trustees, likewise, signed a certificate of Dissolution of the Congregation Beth David Cemetery Association on June 27, 1933⁸ and transferred the cemetery to Congregation B'nai David, with the understanding that "property hereby conveyed is a cemetery and used solely for burial and cemetery purposes, ... as long as second party remains the owner thereof, without in any way limiting or restricting the right of Second Party to sell or otherwise dispose of the said property when its use as a cemetery has been discontinued." The quit claim deed was signed on October 11, 1933.⁹

In the late 1940s and early 1950s many of the area's Jewish residents began to move to Northwest Detroit or to suburbs in Oakland County. B'nai David purchased a site on Southfield Road in Southfield Township in 1954 and broke ground on a new building the following year. The congregation moved out of the city in 1958, seeking a buyer for its then-vacant building. Still, the congregation's burials continued at its Detroit location, but eventually tapered off by the 1970s and 80s as more of its members preferred the suburban cemetery locations. Fewer and fewer burials took place after the closing of B'nai David Synagogue in Southfield in 1994. Many from the former temple joined Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield and chose burials at Clover Hill Park Jewish Cemetery in Birmingham.

Jewish Burial Tradition

The Jewish deceased are laid to rest within twenty-four hours, or as soon after as possible. Jews are not embalmed; the body is washed in a ritual bath, clothed in a simple shroud of linen or muslin, and laid to rest as is or in a pegged wooden box without any metal. The body of the deceased is not displayed. Ostentation, such as flowers, are eschewed. After the body or coffin is lowered to the ground, the mourners help fill the grave. The family and friends sit shiva for seven days, and it is usually a year before the gravestone is set.

Yiddish, the language of Jewish immigrants, was dominant in Jewish communities throughout the United States in the mid-to-late-19th century, as first German, then Eastern European Jews arrived from abroad. The gravestones at B'nai David Cemetery bear words in Hebrew (the ancient language of the Jews), Yiddish (a Germanic language with local dialects), and English, sometimes in combination. Inscriptions on headstones tended to emphasize simplicity, with the English name of the deceased, their Hebrew name, and dates of birth and death. The Hebrew letters, 'ה' ב' צ' נ' ת', that are the initials of the words in the phrase, as translated into English, *May his/her soul be bound up in the eternal bond of life*, are often included, as is another Hebrew text abbreviated פ' נ' (Pe Nun), for *Here is buried*.

Select Interments at B'nai David Cemetery

⁸ It was signed by six trustees - M. Soverinsky, President; H. Belensky; Vice President: N.L. Tracer, Secretary; I. Goldman, Treasurer; Max Weisberg and MM (Moishe Meyer) Weisberg.

⁹ Quit Claim Deed, Liber 4043. Page 618, 11 Oct. 1933.

Bertha H. Levinson (d. 1906) and Julius H. Levinson (d. 1912)

In the early 1900s, the Levinsons, Julius H. and Bertha H., were active members of Beth David Synagogue. Before moving their family to Detroit in 1900, Julius and Bertha were the earliest Jewish settlers in the Traverse City, MI area, where they settled in 1868 after migrating from Suwalki, Russian Poland as young adults.¹⁰ Julius, who had established himself in the mercantile business in Petoskey and then Traverse City, was among the first trustees of the Hebrew Congregation of Traverse City, an organization incorporated in 1882 that built the orthodox Beth El Synagogue in 1885-86.¹¹ Julius' original family name was Danto, but as a son of Levi (the priestly tribe of Israel), he changed it to Levison when he came to the United States, and later spelled it as Levinson. He and Bertha had nine children, with five living into adulthood.¹²

Soon after arriving in Detroit, Julius Levinson's name began to appear on documents related to Beth Israel Synagogue and cemetery in Detroit. He was elected cantor of Congregation Beth David in 1904,¹³ was president of the cemetery association in 1905¹⁴, and president of the congregation, as referenced in his wife Bertha's obituary.¹⁵ Mrs. J. H. Levinson (1848-1906) suffered a stroke, and, six months later, gangrene, from which she died in 1906 at age 58. The remains of Bertha Levinson were joined by her husband, Julius (1845-1912), six years later after his death at age 67, marked by a single shared, simple, gray granite headstone in the B'nai David Cemetery. The life expectancy of a white male in 1910 was 49; a white woman 52 - thus the Levinsons had lived full lives.¹⁶

The Levinsons were likely among the older members of the Beth David congregation, arriving in Detroit from Traverse City later in their lives. However, they had much in common with other Ashkenazi Jews who migrated from Eastern Europe between 1880 and 1920, when over two million Jews fled Russia to escape blatant anti-semitism, discrimination, pogroms, and forced conscription into the Russian Army.

Like many, the Levinsons were able to bring over other family members from Russia to join them in the 1880s, when pogroms (mass killings) had reached a peak. Also like the Levinsons, many families bore many children but, because of the high child mortality rate, not all survived. Many Jewish immigrants also had their names changed for them upon entering the United States. Many started out as peddlers, leading to success in the mercantile and scrap businesses. And all wanted a better life for their children.

¹⁰ Devera Steinberg Stocker, Bess Alper Dutsch, Naomi Buchhalter Floch, "History of the Traverse City Jewish Community: Part One," *Michigan Jewish History*, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, v. 19 no. 2, June 1979. 16.

¹¹ Ibid. Listed on the State Register as the oldest synagogue in continuous use in MI.

¹² Ibid. 16.

¹³ Biographical Sketches of Rabbis and Cantors Officiating in the US, in *The American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 6 (September 10, 1904, to September 29, 1905 / 5665), 220.

¹⁴ "Body is to be Exhumed," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 May 1905. Exhumation of the body of little Marvin Feldman, who "was killed by a streetcar on Hastings Street," required the cemetery president's authorization.

¹⁵ Death Ends Her Agony," *Detroit Free Press*, 16 July 1906.

¹⁶ For life expectancies in the United States by decade: <http://www.elderweb.com/book/appendix/1900-2000-changes-life-expectancy-united-states>

Hyman Kaplan (d. 1917)

Especially tragic were the untimely deaths of children. The broken tree, a symbol of a departed youth, is frequently incorporated into their gravestones, such as that of 21 year old Hyman Kaplan. His family's grief is almost dripping off his tombstone, which reads, in both English and Hebrew, *OUR EYES WON'T DRY OF SORROW FOR OUR BELOVED AND UNFORGOTTEN SON. WHOSE YOUNG LIFE WAS UNLIGHTED BY THE DREADFUL LAKE ST. CLAIRE, JULY 21, 1917*. His grave is marked by a gray granite headstone with a broken tree stump, Star of David, and his image.

Bessie Plotnik (d. 1918)

Many of the headstones bear expressions of poignancy and grief, such as the one marking the remains of Bessie Plotnik. Bessie was the young mother of a three-year-old boy that ran into the path of an oncoming streetcar on Hastings Street. Bessie saved his life by pushing him out of the way, but was struck and killed herself. The grief-stricken father gave his son away, to be raised by a neighbor. This is the story told by Robbie Terman, Director of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives:

The woman was my great-grandmother Bessie. And the boy, my grandfather Isadore. My mother and I had heard the story many times, but it was not until after my grandparents passed away that we began to wonder where Bessie was buried.¹⁷

The inscription on her grave, made more difficult to find because of a spelling change to the name, confirmed the family story: MOTHER BESSIE PLOTNIK GAVE LIFE TO SAVE HER SON.

Esther Malka Shibovich (d. 1918)

Esther died during the influenza pandemic of 1918, leaving her son, Benny, orphaned at age six. Esther was the great-great grandmother of Eva Goldman, the thirteen-year old who, with her father, David Goldman, began the effort to clean up and restore B'nai David Cemetery as part of her bat mitzvah project in 2013.¹⁸

The year that Esther died, some forty-eight interments took place at Beth David Cemetery and, although most of the gravestones do not offer information about the deceased beyond their relations, it can be surmised that most deaths were due to the devastating effects of the flu pandemic of 1918-1919. The flu pandemic killed between 20 and 40 million people worldwide, and it was thought that 20% of world population became infected, 28% of all Americans. Differing from most strains, this one was most deadly for people in the 20-40 age bracket. An estimated 675,000 in the U.S. died of the virus or a secondary infection such as pneumonia, ten times as many who

¹⁷ <http://myjewishdetroit.org/2015/10/lost-and-found-a-genealogy-treasure-hunt/> and conversation with Robbie Terman, Director of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives.

¹⁸ Interview with David Goldman, Pres. of cemetery association. 11/9/15; "Bringing Back B'nai David," *Jewish News*, 9/11/14; John Turk, *Farmington Hills girl's idea for community clean-up of Detroit Jewish cemetery becomes reality, sparks search for local ties to area's Jewish history*, *Oakland Press News*, 24 April 2014.

died in WWI. The illness that was believed to first arrive in the United States through the port of Boston in September 1918 had a second wave when men returned from war after November 11, 1918.

Isadore Mellen (d. 1919)

Mr. Mellen died after a long illness at age 66 at his residence at 254 E. Hancock. He had been a resident of Detroit for thirty-five years, and made his living in the real estate business. He was a former president of Beth David Synagogue and, as superintendent of Beth David Cemetery, was “greatly harassed by mischievous youngsters who desecrated graves, chipping tombstones and breaking windows of houses.”¹⁹

Rabbi Ezekiel Aishiskin (1867-1935)

Rabbi Ezekiel Aishiskin’s headstone is carved with a crown and the Star of David atop: *BELOVED FATHER RABBI EZEKEIL AISHISKIN EMINENT SCHOLAR ELOQUENT SPEAKER PASSED AWAY 5TH DAY IN ELUL 5695 (translated September 3, 1935) AGE 69 YEARS*. Prior to his coming to the United States in approximately 1904 and serving as Rabbi of Beth David, he was a Rabbi in the town of Yashun in the Vilna area of Lithuania. He resided at 293 Adelaide.

Veterans of War

Many new and first generation American Jews fought for their country. Corporal Sidney Gliss was only twenty-one years old when he died in World War I. Peter Bader, a master sergeant with the 449th Bomber Squadron of the United States Army Air Forces, was killed at age 28 on February 28, 1943 in World War II. He was a beloved son and brother. Max Goldberg, a private in the United States Army, “died in the service of his country,” on November 25, 1944 at age twenty-seven. He was a son, devoted father and husband. They are buried at B’nai David Cemetery.

Keywell Family (1919, 1963, 1971)

Henry (1888-1971, age 84) and Rose (Benson) Keywell, (d. 1963, age 72) and Henry’s father Jacob (1865-1919) are buried at B’nai David. A native of Russian Poland, Henry C. Keywell came to the United States in about 1905 with little money in his pocket, but settled in Detroit and went into the dry goods business. This soon led to manufacturing and then building and contracting. A successful businessman and building contractor, he built fourteen apartment buildings by 1922 and built and owned the Grand Victory Theater, a small, neighborhood movie theater in northwest Detroit that opened 1921. He married Rose Benson in 1910 and they had three children.²⁰

Hyman and Pearl (Liebergott) Rottenberg (1953, 1958)

Hyman and Pearl (Liebergott) Rottenberg, grandparents of Detroit native Helene Rottenberg, were born in Russia and came to the United States when they were teenagers. Hyman Rottenberg was a pharmacist who had a drugstore on Linwood and Cortland in Detroit. He was also a part-time cantor, perhaps to the small shuls (congregations) along Wisconsin Avenue. Helene’s father Coleman was the last of seven children, four girls and three boys. Helene remembers that her grandparents lived in the duplex that her family shared on Wisconsin Avenue; her family lived upstairs and her grandmother lived downstairs.

¹⁹Obituary, *Detroit Free Press*, 5 March 1919.

²⁰Burton, Clarence, *City of Detroit, Michigan 1701-1922*. Detroit: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., v 5, 818.

Hyman Rottenberg died around the time Helene was born, in 1953. Pearl was very active in the Jewish community; she was always working for one Jewish cause or another. Helene remembers that, “she would leave food on the stove for them and then go off and do good work! I was told that I was the apple of her eye. I remember being with her, but I was only five.”²¹ After Pearl died (1958), Helene’s family moved to Pinehurst in Northwest Detroit.

Soverinsky Family (1934, 1943, 1952, 1970)

Lou Soverinsky’s grandparents and great-grandparents were buried at B’nai David Cemetery. Typical of several families buried at B’nai David cemetery, the hard working Soverinsky family provided the spark to enable future generations to achieve and develop an ethic to help their community. Morris’s grandson Lou serves the community as a physician and is active in the community today.

In 1917, Morris Soverinsky (d. 1970, age 87) came to America from Russia, and went back after two years to return in 1921 with the rest of his family, including his father Harry (d. 1934, age 70) and mother Ann (d. 1952, age 94). He found work in a business that was open to Jews, the junk business. In time Morris purchased a horse and wagon and the family scoured the alleys of Detroit looking for scrap including metal, paper and cloth. He formed a partnership with a Mr. Belinsky, Mr. Molinsky and a third man to create General Mill Supply, a wiping cloth business. Morris eventually owned the business with his sister May’s husband, Max Kletter. Located at 8931 Greely near Holbrook, the three-story building had both a paper and metal press, and at one time the business supported twenty to thirty employees. During WWII, due to a shortage of cotton, six Polish women worked on the building’s third floor tearing apart old mattresses and recycling the cotton into bales to be used to make new ones.

Morris and his wife, Molly (d. 1943, age 66) lived at 3036 Elmhurst by B’nai David Synagogue. He was an officer of the congregation and president of the cemetery association trustees when it changed its name in 1933. He and Molly raised their six children in the neighborhood and at B’nai David, and everyone helped in the business. When the children married they lived in housing Morris owned. Morris did well enough that he sold Ace Wiping Cloth their first building. Today Ace is a leader in the Detroit region’s wiping cloth industry.²²

Atlivaick (Atler) Family (1924, 1950, 1967, 1971, 1977, 1979)

Another extended family united after death at B’nai David Cemetery was the Atlivaick family. Abraham Zuse Atlivaick (1861-1924) and Sara Wolgin Atlivaick (1863-1950) immigrated to the United States from the Russian Federation. Of their ten children, most changed their surname to Atler, and four were buried at B’nai David Cemetery, along with their parents. Among them were two sons who became doctors, Lawrence Roderick Atler (1899-1967) and Leroy H. Atler (1912-1979). Gertrude (1896-1971), bookkeeper at Walker Bros Catering, and Edith (1901-1977), a stenographer, lived with them at 9598 Oakland Avenue, according to Polk’s *1924 Detroit City Directory*. Like the Soverinsky family, Atlivaick (Atler) family members lived together or close by.

²¹Interview with Helene Rottenberg, Dec. 8, 2015.

²²Interview by Arnold Collens, Past President, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan. Jan. 7, 2016.

Betty (Levine) Weiss (2015)

The last interment at B'nai David Cemetery was that of Betty Weiss, 89, of Farmington Hills, MI, who died on the 13th of March, 2015. She requested burial aside her deceased husband, Sidney David Weiss (1924-1977), who predeceased her by thirty-eight years.

DESCRIPTION:

B'nai David Cemetery occupies a large parcel of land on a hill on an almost triangular block bounded by Van Dyke Avenue on the east, Grinnell on the north, St. Cyril on the West, and Marjorie on the south. It is situated between a commercial property at the north end and residential property, now mostly cleared, on the south. The raised grade of the cemetery is separated from the public right-of-way by double retaining walls, likely placed there when Van Dyke was widened. It is entered through a high metal, gated driveway off of the west side of Van Dyke near the center of the block. The paved driveway forms a loop in and out of the cemetery.

Within the loop is a grassy knoll with a tree and the granite monument "In Everlasting Memory of the Six million Jews who Perished in the European Holocaust." An eternal light is positioned in front of the monument and an inscribed resting slab memorial and flagpole forward of it. A concrete bench is also situated near the tree on the grassy knoll.

A slab laid on the ground at the foot of the flagpole, dedicated by the Bader family, is inscribed with the American flag and Israeli flag. Listed are the names of the war veterans buried at B'nai David: Mst. Sgt. Peter Bader (d. 1943); Capt. Arthur I. Shapiro (1944); Capt. Louis Harold Blustein (1952); Capt. Sidney Gliss (1918); Pfc. Nathan Shapiro (1947); and Pvt. Max Goldberg (1944).

Approximately 1300 burial plots are neatly arranged in rows on a grass surface to the west and north of the loop. A patch of grass once occupied by a caretaker's house lies to the south of the loop. The plots are generally arranged very close together and bordered with curbs or frames, creating narrow "beds" to hold flowers. The gravestone is often composed of a rough, unpolished stone base with a standing slab or block on top.

The gravestones themselves range from modest sandstone to polished granite, small to grand, but none too ostentatious, befitting those buried. The most common symbols on the gravestones are the Star of David, a six-pointed star that is a symbol of Judaism; and the menorah, usually with five branches. Other symbols seen on gravestones in Jewish cemeteries and in B'nai David in particular are Cohanims Hands, two hands with outspread fingers that are in the form of a priestly blessing when the deceased is from priestly stock; open books indicating the presence of a rabbi, official or scholar; candles, especially on the graves of women, who traditionally light the candles; and a broken tree or branch as a sign that the deceased passed away at a young age.

It is generally not Jewish practice to have porcelain pictures of the dead placed on headstones. However, it is mostly in small Orthodox cemeteries such as B'nai David that they are sometimes present. Porcelain pictures are everlasting if not disturbed. Also a feature, if an impermanent one,

of Jewish cemeteries are stones left on top of the gravestone by visitors to indicate that their relatives and friends are not forgotten.

Criteria

The proposed historic district meets the first criteria contained in section 25-2-2:

(1) Sites, buildings, structures, or archeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified.

Composition of the Historic Designation Advisory Board

The Historic Designation Advisory Board has nine appointed members and three *ex-officio* members, all residents of Detroit. The appointed members are: Kwaku Atara, Melanie A. Bazil, Keith A. Dye, Zené Fogel-Gibson, Theresa Hagood, Calvin Jackson, Victoria Byrd-Olivier and Kari Smith. The *ex-officio* members who may be represented by members of their staff, are Director of Historical Department, the Director of the City Planning Commission, and the director of the Planning and Development Department.

B'nai David Cemetery Bibliography

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“Body is to be Exhumed,” *Detroit Free Press*, 25 May 1905.

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Steiberg, Devera Stocker; Alper Dutsch, Bess; Buchhalter, Naomi Floch, “History of the Traverse City Jewish Community: Part One,” *Michigan Jewish History*, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, v. 19 no. 2, June 1979. 16.

Turk, John. “Farmington Hills girl’s idea for community clean-up of Detroit Jewish cemetery becomes reality, sparks search for local ties to area’s Jewish history,” *Oakland Press News*, 24 April 2014.

Interviews:

Arnold Collens, Past President, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, Jan.7, 2016.

Gerald S. Cook, past president, Jewish Historical Society of Michigan, Jan. 7, 2016.

David Goldman, President of B'nai David Cemetery Association, 11/9/2015.

Helene Rottenberg, Detroit resident and musician, Dec. 8, 2015.

Robbie Terman, Director of the Leonard N. Simons Jewish Community Archives.

On-line sources:

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<http://myjewishdetroit.org/2015/10/lost-and-found-a-genealogy-treasure-hunt/>

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<http://www.elderweb.com/book/appendix/1900-2000-changes-life-expectancy-united-states>

Government Documents:

Article of Agreement between John V. Sheehan and wife to Beth David Cemetery Association, a MI Corporation, Wayne County Register, July 8, 1903.

Certificate of Dissolution of the Congregation Beth David Cemetery Association, Wayne County Register, 27 June, 1933

Warranty Deed, Liber 1238. p. 280, Wayne County Register, 19 Oct 1917.

Quit Claim Deed, Liber 4043. Page 618, Wayne County Register, 11 Oct. 1933.